Increase in earth's temperature

466. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Earth is hottest now in 400 years;

(b) if so, the adverse effects of rise of half a degree Celsius temperature during 20th century on Indian soil;

(c) whether the decrease of ground water level in India is the outcome of this rise of half degree celsius or other-wise; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government to increase the ground water level by tree plantation in the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no specific study regarding adverse effects of increase of half degree Celsius temperature during the twentieth century on the Indian soil.

(c) The direct adverse effect of increase in temperature on ground water resources is not well established.

(d) The Government is promoting afforestation through Centrally Sponsored Scheme National Afforestation Programme, under which soil moisture conservation measures is one of the components.

Afforestation of unused land

†467. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 39 per cent of the country's geographical land, fertile or infertile, is lying unused;

(b) if not, the facts in this regard;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether afforestation of this land can protect the country's environment from pollution; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto and the outline of future plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) As per Wastelands Atlas of India 2005 prepared by Ministry of Rural Development and National Remote Sensing Agency, Hyderabad, an area of 31,66,414 sq. kms. was surveyed out of 32,87,263 sq. kms. geographical area of the country for wastelands mapping. The area of surveyed wastelands in the country was 5,52,692.25 sq. kms. or 17.45 per cent of the surveyed geographical area in 2003.

(c) and (d) Afforestation may have beneficial effects on pollution abatement. The National Forest Policy 1988 envisages the national goal of one-third of the total land area of the country under forest and tree cover. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has mooted several initiatives to achieve the above goal. These include provision of assistance for High-tech nurseries and Satellite nurseries for production of Quality Planting material, augmentation of National Afforestation Programme (NAP) with additional component of assistance to Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), effecting step-up in budgetary allocation, securing increased people's participation, and emphasizing augmentation of staff strength at the cutting edge level in States. Besides, promotion of tree planting on private land, including farm lands, is being ensured by advising States to rationalize the regulations relating to felling and transit of trees grown on private lands. The States have also been advised to constitute inter-departmental committee chaired by Chief Secretary to involve all land-owing Departments in tree planting. In addition a Mulit-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) framework for forestation involving the land-owning agency, the local village community, and the sponsor has been mooted by the Ministry. Besides, a scheme for Afforestation of non-forestlands involving Panchayati Raj Institution has been recommended in the Mid-Term Appraisal of Tenth Five Year Plan.